Eroding citizenship: gender and labour in contemporary India
Chhachhi, A.

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Conclusion

Alice: “In my country when we run fast enough we reach somewhere.”

Red Queen: “…That is a poor sort of place. In our country we have to run fast enough to stay in the same place.”

(Alice in Wonderland)

Workers in the Delhi electronics industry certainly have to keep running to maintain whatever they have, as the forces of industrial and economic restructuring undermine the enabling conditions which laid the possibility for assertion of their citizenship rights. Employment and citizenship are the two bases for entitlements to social security and social provisioning. Given the limited nature of citizenship-based entitlements in India, and the secondary status accorded to women in community laws regulating the private domain, employment remains an important, and at times the only route for women to access independent entitlements to social citizenship. These entitlements include income, health insurance, pensions, and coverage for some aspects of ‘care work’, i.e. childbirth and childcare. Despite gendered labour markets and location in sectors and jobs at the lower end of employment hierarchies where such entitlements are absent, entry into waged work does provide the conditions for the assertion of social citizenship.

This study shows that a section of women workers was able both to assert collective agency at the workplace and to negotiate areas of autonomy within the household, albeit within given gendered structures of constraint. The study demonstrates that these instances of ‘citizenship in practice’, of the transformation of certain capabilities into effective functionings, were based on the enabling conditions provided by the entry of women into the labour market. The potential access to the seven forms of security noted in the ILO definition of Decent Work through job-based entitlements was important in creating these conditions. Although access to these entitlements was differentiated across gendered labour regimes, the commitment of the state to provide these through labour regulations provided the possibility for women workers to assert their social citizenship rights. These enabling conditions are being undermined today due to implicit and explicit de-regulation, leading to erosion of social citizenship. The erosion of citizenship refers to two processes: the social exclusion of women workers who were able to assert and gain citizenship rights
at the workplace and within the household; and the elimination of the conditions which could allow other women workers the possibility of asserting their citizenship rights in the future. Two tendencies are identified as leading to the erosion of social citizenship: the informalisation of the labour market and increasing vulnerability of the household.

In this concluding chapter, I summarise the main empirical and theoretical findings. The implications of further globalisation of the Indian electronics industry and state responses, as presented in the Report of the Second National Commission on Labour (GOI, 2002), are critically assessed from a perspective of entitlements to decent work and social security.

State Intervention, Flexibility and Labour Control

Rather than a singular focus on ‘flexibility’, the study adopted a broader framework of labour control and applied the concept of gendered labour regimes. The nature of gendered labour regimes depends on a combination of exogenous and endogenous factors. These include state intervention through labour regulations and social security, the social organisation of the labour market, market competition, managerial strategies and workers’ responses. These determine the degree of workers’ dependence/ lack of dependence on the enterprise or the state for the reproduction of labour power.

A typology of four co-existent gendered labour regimes in the electronics industry in Delhi (differentiated on the basis of domestic/foreign capital, age of enterprise and labour process) reveals variations in the process of informalisation of work and increasing vulnerability of women workers as the electronics industry undergoes massive restructuring to meet the competitive pressures of liberalisation. Analysis of recruitment strategies, gendered forms of labour control, construction of gendered work identities, and resistance, highlight the interplay between structural and agent-linked factors in the constitution of the workforce.

In enterprises established in the pre-liberalisation phase and in those that started or expanded in the period of liberalisation, there were wide variations in the implementation of labour regulations. In the type represented by GLR1, there was no implementation of labour regulations. In GLR 2, a substantial process of implementation had occurred. In GLR 3 & 4, there were uneven degrees of implementation. The analysis of four labour regimes shows that a focus only on the presence or absence of labour regulations is not enough to understand the nature of and changes in gendered labour regimes. The most significant factor highlighted in this study is the importance of ‘citizenship in practice’, i.e. the collective action by workers to force management to implement statutory labour rights. Changes in workers’ conditions of dependence for the reproduction of their labour power were a process initiated by workers, and did not flow benignly from the mere existence of state
regulations. At the same time, the existence of these regulations provided the enabling conditions for workers to demand their entitlements.

Highlighting the inclusion/exclusion dynamic inherent in labour regulations of the pre-liberalisation phase, GLR1 shows how the absence of this enabling condition trapped workers into conditions of absolute dependence and vulnerability subject to a despotic regime. Similar conditions existed in GLR 2, but the coverage of large enterprises by labour regulations and the right to organise enabled a freeing of workers from a condition of absolute dependence on the enterprise. Both job security and housing security were significant in changing the nature of the gendered labour regime from a despotic to a hegemonic one. This illustrated the social compact between labour and capital in the pre-liberalisation era, though at a much lower level of social protection for workers compared to the public sector.

A different picture emerges through analysis of labour regimes established in the era of liberalisation. The labour process and the labour market emerge as more significant factors in those enterprises (GLR 3 and 4) which expanded or started in the liberalisation period with closer ties with multinational capital. First, there is a far more conscious managerial strategy to recruit a particular kind of workforce. This is evident in a recruitment strategy which is directed towards a mixed workforce. Differences of region and class play an important role in labour control through the recruitment in GLR 3 and 4 of women migrants from Kerala and young unmarried women from Delhi and neighbouring areas. There is also a more specific demand for young unmarried men and women with secondary school education. Labour control in these ‘new’ enterprises was based on a more sophisticated combination of technological/bureaucratic controls embedded in the labour process, gender and ethnic divisions, and institutional structures and ideologies outside the factory – crucially, the family and the neighbourhood.

Second, these labour regimes were following a dual strategy of stability and flexibility. In GLR 3, there is a systematic attempt to clamp down on the process of regularisation and implementation of statutory rights through such actions as changing workers’ designations, and downgrading scales to circumvent the Minimum Wages Act. In GLR 4, polarisation was created between workers from middle-class families with technical degrees who were granted statutory rights and given further training; and the mass of production workers who were maintained as a non-permanent ‘apprentice’ workforce and denied job security. Voice representation in particular was crushed in these labour regimes through gendered methods of labour control.

To sum up, the study confirms the trend noted by national-level survey data and recent case studies of a trend towards informalisation of the labour market in India. However, this study goes further to show that the process of informalisation encapsulates a number of different processes which macro-level assessments tend to conflate. Three different processes are identified. First is the social exclusion of workers with long service records. This is being done
through the dismantling of the organised sector and a reversal of the process of regularisation and implementation of statutory rights for workers in restructured locally-owned enterprises that have developed closer links with multinationals. Second, new employment in multinational enterprises is creating a hierarchy between a mass of non-permanent women workers with minimum benefits and a layer of women workers from middle-class backgrounds who receive specialised training, full statutory benefits and permanent status. Third, tiny and small enterprises, which anyway employed a casualised workforce, are faced with extinction due to the flood of cheap electronics imports from China. This sector of employment in the unorganised sector is shrinking, further restricting opportunities for jobs, even insecure and low-paid ones. Finally, generalisations that there is a trend towards an increase in home-based work in all industrial sectors need to be treated with caution. Factors related to technology and requirements of quality control prevent subcontracting to home-based workers in the electronics industry. These requirements, enhanced through global competitive pressures, are also leading to an increase in captive subcontracting, a shift away from independent subcontracting which was predominant in the electronics industry in the 1980s.

In the Delhi electronics industry, the main managerial strategy in response to industrial restructuring was ‘defensive flexibility’. Recent literature on industrial restructuring in other industries has identified ‘new’ forms of flexibility, particularly in large firms that have resorted to automation, restructuring existing tasks and subcontracting (Gandhi & Shah, 2002). Such changes have also occurred in the Delhi electronics industry, but it is only in the newly established multinational factories that there is a broader strategy of moving towards lean production. In the other labour regimes in which domestic capital remains dominant, managerial strategies of restructuring are not leading to either a post-Fordist model of lean production or flexible specialisation. Instead, ‘old’ forms of labour market flexibility – subcontracting, relocation, changing the workforce from permanent to non-permanent, and increased hiring of contract labour – have been intensified. This ‘defensive flexibility’ is not new – what is new is that this strategy (its effect seen in the overall informalisation of employment) is implicitly sanctioned by the state today. In the pre-liberalisation era, similar attempts to ‘dis-organise the organised sector’ could be and often were successfully challenged and checked. In the post-liberalisation era, these processes of ‘organised informalisation’ appear to have state sanction, as the state withdraws its commitment to the provision or implementation of statutory labour regulations.

**Linkage between Gendered Labour Regimes and Domestic Regimes**

The study shows the centrality of gender as a form of labour control, and how the incorporation of extra-factory institutions and ideologies into the workplace
is integral to the construction of different gendered labour regimes. There were wide variations in the mobilisation of ‘women’s special qualities’ and notions of femininity /masculinity, pointing to the importance of separating the assumed characteristics of women as ‘cheap, docile, nimble fingered, flexible’ usually presented as a package for the employment of women. Analysis of these labour regimes shows that cheap labour is not always the only reason to employ women. In GLR 1, men are paid the same low wages as women and there is no sharp sexual division of labour requiring ‘nimble fingers’. The main reason for employing women in these tiny and small enterprises is that they are trustworthy, docile and have a calming influence on the men. In this case, women are employed to control men. These feminine characteristics combined with their extreme vulnerability as single women and primary family earners created an inbuilt system of labour control. In GLR 2, 3, and 4, the more automated and advanced labour process demands ‘nimble fingers’ based on the hidden training women receive through socialisation, plus the characteristics of docility and ‘freshness’ for training. Through examination of the interplay between masculinity and femininity on the shop floor, and managerial and workers’ self-construction of ‘women’s work and men’s work’, the findings demonstrate that gender meanings are also constructed within the production process, and are not simply transposed from the family into the factory.

A key issue highlighted in the analysis, particularly in GLR 2, 3 and 4, is the contradictory role of the family as an institution of control as well as support for women workers. Even as familial ideologies and authority patterns are reproduced within the factory, at the same time, factory mothers and daughters challenged these at a certain point and their ‘real family’ provided support and succour in the struggle for dignity and rights at the workplace.

Industrial Militancy and Domestic Autonomy

The linkage between industrial militancy and domestic autonomy has been illustrated in this study. In all gendered labour regimes, forms of labour control were negotiated, challenged and undermined in different ways through covert and overt actions by women workers. Even in small and tiny despotic labour regimes with no possibility of unionisation, women workers played managerial logic against the managers to extract concessions. In large enterprises, women workers were active in the formation of unions and the struggle to implement statutory regulations. Notwithstanding the failure of specific struggles, these expressions of individual and collective agency at the workplace reflected an awareness and consciousness of entitlements and rights. The forms in which these were to be asserted had changed with a shift from classical unionism to a new militant unionism. A comparison of two women leaders of two generations showed differences in forms and methods of struggle, and in perceptions of the use of violence and extra-legal tactics. The analysis also highlights continuing gendered structures of constraint which restrict and limit the conversion of this
awareness into sustained organisation. The conditions that enabled the emergence of women leaders were freedom from domestic responsibilities, support from the family, and continued male support in dealing with the management and local state administration. The entry of women into the public arena of demonstrations, police stations and courts required a constant attention to and negotiation of the gender codes of morality and respectability for women.

The experience of waged work and expressions of industrial militancy were accompanied by a process of increasing assertion of autonomy within the domestic sphere. Confirming the Engelian/Sen proposition, outside earnings did provide a fallback position for women which facilitated the possibility of negotiating autonomy in relation to the structures of authority in domestic regimes. The study shows the significance of type of household and lifecycle factors in determining the process of negotiation, with married women in extended households most limited in the types of autonomy they could wrest. In some cases an independent income did enable women in difficult situations to take the exit option. However, in most cases the assertions of rights such as to own income or to choose a marriage partner were cast within the terms of local theories of entitlement. Rather than openly challenging male authority, wives and daughters resorted to covert forms of negotiations that paid obeisance to cultural norms even as they simultaneously undermined them. Hence daughters' income was euphemised as 'earning a dowry/time pass', thereby non-perceiving their contributions to the household economy. Overall, the expressions of citizenship in practice both at the workplace and within the household reflect processes of change as well as continuity. One aspect of the material basis for male authority – the man as the main provider/breadwinner – has clearly broken down: households in this study depended crucially and at times primarily, on women's earnings. At the same time, the need for male protection to negotiate public spaces and other societal structures has remained, confirming Kabeer's observations on women garment workers in Bangladesh. Even this, however, I have suggested is being questioned by the younger generation of women workers who are subject to the contending forces of 'market citizenship' versus more collective forms of citizenship, and women/worker identities versus consumer oriented 'fantasies of identity' (Moore, 1994). These women, influenced by televisions and films, with albeit contradictory messages, express a desire for more democratic gender relations and equality as citizens within the hidden domains of the workplace and the household.

Eroding Citizenship

These instances of 'citizenship in practice' are being eroded. A process of undermining the enabling conditions at the workplace has been accompanied by increasing vulnerability at the household level, as a result of the broader process of economic restructuring. In response to the phenomenal increase in prices of basic necessities since 1991, workers have made major household budgetary
adjustments in relation to consumption, health and education. These budgetary adjustments were immediate responses to the rising cost of living, showing increasing pressure on levels and quality of consumption, changes in everyday life and tensions in gender relations. This study confirms the increase in the ‘reproductive tax’ as a consequence of economic restructuring by highlighting features specific to a particular section of workers in India.

Changes in consumption took gender-differentiated forms, with further differences between married and unmarried women. The hidden costs of adjustment were borne primarily by married women workers, particularly mothers in nuclear families, who experienced an increase in care work labour time and reduction in food intake. Other recent studies in India have also pointed to an increase in women’s labour time as a result of economic restructuring (Gandhi and Shah 2002). In this study, two other aspects have emerged as more significant: an increase in the intangible aspects of care-work and an *intra-household* transfer of costs of reproduction. There is an increase in demands on women’s physical labour as well as emotional labour, leading to a tremendous rise in anxiety, tension and insecurity. This anxiety stems from women having to take on greater responsibility for the overall reproduction of the household, and from changes occurring in traditionally defined as well as incipient less traditional gender relations. There is a transfer from shared responsibility for earning an income to women taking on the primary responsibility, a transfer of even the few tasks that men undertook in domestic labour (shopping) and daughters or domestic servants helped with to mothers having complete responsibility for domestic labour. This has meant an increase in ‘time poverty’ for these women. The stress and strain of a situation where traditional gender roles, rights and responsibilities can no longer be relied upon has in some cases led to an increase in domestic conflict and violence. Clearly, these tensions affect the well-being of members of the household.

Children were not immediately affected in these households: there did not appear to be a reduction of food for children, although there was a shift to bad quality and junk food that will have long-term health implications. Despite a rise in costs of schooling, children were not withdrawn, and primary education was prioritised through taking loans and cutting other areas of consumption. Gender differences occurred in relation to higher education as young men undertook vocational training while young women took up jobs. Unlike studies in Latin America and Africa which point to drastic reductions in consumption, the households in this study have managed to cope, partly through the ‘cushioning’ of the effects of price rise through women’s labour and ingenuity, and partly through the deployment of labour.

An examination of household assets showed that, apart from a section of workers who had housing security, labour was the main asset. These households were primarily dependent on the labour market for survival and security. The consequences of this dependence are seen clearly through a case study of workers who had lost their jobs. A large section remained unemployed. Some
men managed to enter self-employment, and the rest only got irregular jobs in the unorganised sector. Hinterland migrant workers from U.P. and Bihar did not return to their villages, contrary to earlier patterns. The gaon (village) did not constitute a refuge; rural links only acted as a short-term buffer. Women's earnings became crucial for the survival of these households. No woman worker could enter into the higher end of work in the unorganised sector, i.e. self-employment. Instead, women were pushed into the lowest paid work as domestic servants or at best, home-based garment workers. Income reduction in the space of two years was drastic. Cuts in household budgets, the changes in everyday life, food reduction, an increase in ill health, and the negative effects on education of children – all had immediate and intergenerational consequences. Gender relations within these households were under great stress. Men hid the fact that women were sustaining the household, and women felt their autonomy was being restricted and increased controls were being exerted on their mobility. There was a loss of dignity and identity as workers slipped from a self-identity of being organised, unionised workers with a highly developed consciousness and pride in their skills and contribution to the industry, to extreme vulnerability, insecurity, and in some cases destitution.

These processes foreground the linkage between changes in the workplace and the household. The undermining of enabling conditions in both locales due to industrial restructuring and economic restructuring are leading to the reversal of a process which made it possible for women to assert ‘citizenship in practice’ in both arenas. The absence of a strong asset base and strong and extensive citizenship entitlements to transfers from the state sector implies that, as Elson succinctly put it:

It is over-optimistic to expect the domestic sector to absorb all the risks. When people have to live from hand to mouth, human energies and morale are weakened, ‘contingent labour’ is conducive to ‘contingent households’ which fragment and disintegrate with costs for the people from these households and for the wider society. (Elson, 2000:94)

Both men and women workers in this study are paying these costs, but with a greater burden on women who continue to provide a buffer to prevent a descent into more extreme conditions of distress, insecurity and vulnerability – a thin line as the case study of job loss workers illustrates. Apart from the limits to the ‘elasticity’ of women’s labour, noted by feminist economists, this study also highlights how increased time and emotional pressures can lead to reversal of processes which were leading to a democratisation of gender relations. A ‘crisis of masculinity’ has been noted by a number of studies on the effects of economic restructuring. The consequences of this are detrimental to both men and women, since attempts at reconstituting and re-asserting hegemonic masculinity can take violent forms at an individual level. At a collective level, forces of religious fundamentalisms (Hindutva in India for instance) provide legitimised practices, compensations and constructed collectivities for this re-
constitution. The reversal in the process of democratisation at the workplace and within the household therefore has wider and disturbing implications.

Theoretical implications

At a conceptual level, the analysis of gendered labour regimes questions the notion of a single causal determinant of the nature of labour regimes, and foregrounds the inter-linkage between state intervention, labour process, and social institutions of the labour market, managerial strategies and workers' responses. The co-existence of different regimes within the same industry in the same location, and the shift in the nature of gendered labour regimes due to 'citizenship in practice' and the pressures of market competition, points to the limitations of a universal, generic schema of labour regimes from despotic to hegemonic as presented by Burawoy. At the same time, state intervention/non-intervention is a significant determinant and provides the enabling/unabling conditions for the practice of citizenship within and outside the factory. The study also emphasises the importance of not freezing the frame of analysis and generalising from a limited period of time. Gendered labour regimes construct distinct types of labour control but cannot maintain a hegemonic system of control endlessly – these are negotiated orders always subject to the changing dynamics of the institutional context and workers' subjectivities and agency.

The study argues for a broader framework to analyse gender and labour in the context of economic restructuring. Studies on poverty and restructuring have taken the household as a unit and focussed on livelihood strategies without entering the 'abode of production'. On the other hand, a singular focus on the workplace which is implicit in the Decent Work paradigm only addresses workers as 'industrial citizens' (as does Burawoy, 1985), and restricts the definition of 'work' to that which is paid and visible. This model of industrial citizenship has been a masculine one, with embedded gender contracts in labour legislation showing that state intervention is not gender neutral (Chapter 2). A gendered analysis leads to the examination of the mutually constituting linkages between workplace and household, and a broadening of the notion of work to include the care economy. Inclusion of this area of primarily women's work leads to a wider notion of social citizenship. The significance of this lies in that care work – its absence, presence and increase – have immediate gender-specific implications for 'citizenship in practice'. Viewed through the prism of different forms of control and 'citizenship in practice', it is not enough only to recognise the value of this work at an ethical level or to treat it as a separate category of 'work' as distinct from labour (as Guy Standing does). It is necessary to see the linkages that work against as well as facilitate the real process of asserting the right to entitlements (see Saith 2004 for a similar argument to extend the definition of decent work). Further work is needed on competing notions of citizenship in the contemporary period: industrial, social and market - each of which specifies a different basis for entitlements and has differential
consequences for 'citizenship in practice'. This requires moving beyond the abodes of production and reproduction to an examination also of the sphere of consumption.

**Future Trends in the Electronics Industry**

The first phase of women's employment in traditional industries such as textile, coal mines and plantations ended with masculinisation as these industrial sectors got organised, i.e. implemented employment-based entitlements as a result of union pressure. A second phase of women's employment in modern industries such as pharmaceuticals, food processing, garments and electronics in the nineteen seventies initiated a new cycle of struggles to 'feminise' the conditions of industrial employment. A section of women workers in this study who formed part of the second phase have been eliminated along with male workers of that era. Does the employment of women in labour regimes of the third and fourth type described in this study represent a third phase? Future possibilities for women's employment in the electronics industry, given the features of industrial restructuring and labour market flexibility sketched above, depend crucially on international competition. The trajectory is not clear. Will changing labour processes based on new technology provide new areas of work in the industry, so that a progressive movement could be traced from the Wire Girls of the pre-liberalisation era to the Operators of the post-liberalisation era with the possibility of women also becoming Electronic Engineers? Or will there be a continued polarisation between a core/periphery divide? Or is the trend towards a maquiladorisation of the industry? The first phase of accumulation in the Mexican maquiladoras was indeed based on women's labour, but as technological upgrading occurred, the second phase has seen a shift to men entering into the industry. A process of masculinisation is now underway in the maquilas, repeating the old story that women get marginalised as new technology is introduced.

There continues to be controversy over the employment potential of the electronics industry. On one side, there are arguments that as labour costs rise in Southeast Asia, India may emerge as the next assembly base for big Japanese consumer electronics companies. An assessment on wage differentials by Morgan Stanley, an American investment bank, showed that the wage cost advantage of the NICS has been eroded for the past decade, and India and China have the lowest labour costs today. On the other hand, it is stated that increasing automation has reduced the advantages India has as a low-wage processor of electronics. A World Bank-commissioned study in 1993 stated, 'India's unskilled and semi-skilled labour, which is widely available at a wage differential that is nearly as great as that for skilled manpower, is now relatively unimportant for the electronics industry because electronics process technology has become so capital intensive' (G. Gowen & D. Hefler, 1993:214). It is argued
that the main reason for the entry of multinationals into India is not a search for cheap labour, but access to a vast middle-class market.

Whether India provides a cheap labour platform or just access to markets, the implications for women workers are serious. The process of industrial restructuring in the electronics industry in this transitional period is leading to the social exclusion of men and women workers. This ranges from exclusion from protection by labour laws to a total exclusion from employment. It is worth noting that a new discourse is emerging on the adverse effects of women’s employment based on evidence that there is a higher level of child mortality in households where women are employed (Swaminathan, 2002:91). Such arguments need further substantiation, as they can provide a justification for excluding women from access to waged work, even as they highlight once again that the primary responsibility for care work remains with women. At the same time there is hope, as unionisation still continues to spread in the industry, often initiated by young women workers. There is a new consciousness as the women who produce the televisions also consume the images produced by television. In their own words, ‘they kept quiet for a few years, but then like jwalamukhis (volcanoes), they exploded into industrial action’. These women are militant, innovative and open to new ideas. Strategic and policy interventions by unions, women’s organisations and policy makers which move beyond traditionally defined demands and recommendations would find a response from this new workforce. These interventions could limit, to a certain extent, the overall trend in the industry towards social exclusion. Much depends on what labour market policies are proposed.

The report of the Second National Commission on Labour (GOI, 2002) has tried to maintain a balance between World Bank and ILO perspectives. The most positive recommendations are for universalising social security, ensuring a minimum wage, addressing the unorganised sector and giving importance to voice representation. In February, 2003, after fifty plus years of independence, the first two people were given citizenship-based entitlements through the issue of social security numbers. A bill on unorganised labour has been introduced in Parliament for discussion. These are indeed positive developments, but there are many troubling aspects of the Commission’s recommendations that call for caution. Certain categories of workers such as supervisors have been excluded from the purview of labour legislation, thus continuing the trend to shift workers from the bargainable category to non-bargainable categories.

In other instances, new conditionalities for entitlements have been introduced. It is recommended that Maternity Benefit be provided only for two children, which implicitly denies this as a right of working women, links it to population control and once again places the burden of the costs of the care economy on women. Other recommendations lead to a withdrawal of rights and gains of the labour movement which have benefited women workers: the ban on night work is to be lifted, and the working day is to be extended to nine hours. In maintaining a commitment to labour market flexibility, the Commission
proposes a trade-off between job security and social security. This could in the long run lead to a process of levelling down, with work-based entitlements wiped out for a minimum level of social security. The recommendations therefore give with one hand and take away with the other, with serious consequences for the assertion of social citizenship.

The stories I hear from the women workers and trade unionists in the Okhla Industrial area are not encouraging. Returning to the women who introduced this study, I found:

- The Calcom case continues: Some workers were taken back, others fired. The company has set up a new plant in NOIDA, and advertises itself as a premier OEM contract manufacturer, using the latest technology. Its website states ‘The total manpower strength in the plant is about 500 with 350 workmen. There are no Unions.’ It remains to be investigated how many of the ‘workmen’ are in fact women.

- The Weston factory has shut down, and the premises now house a showroom of the multinational company LG Electronics. The plant-level trade unionist dealing with the case has been transferred. The workers who did not agree to a settlement got nothing, and are bitter about the management and the union.

- Jaswanti died of tuberculosis. The Texla factory sacked all its workers and employed new workers. Twenty of these are permanent, and the rest are on contract.

- JD finally made a settlement. Fed up with betrayals and delays, she represented her case directly at the Labour Court. When asked why she did not have a lawyer, she said that she knew her case better than anyone else and proceeded to put forward her arguments. The management was advised to come to an agreement, which she accepted since she had suffered a heart attack and was not in good health. Retired but still engaged, she now gives advice to young workers in the neighbourhood.

Note

1 In his discussion of the Budget of 2001-2002, the Finance Minister announced major amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act and Contract Labour Act, calling for exemption for enterprises employing below 1000 workers. This announcement prior to the report of the NCL is seen as evidence that the government had already given a commitment to removing labour market ‘rigidities’.